



February 16, 2007

Testimony supporting HB 654: Preventing Youth Access to Tobacco -- BY:

- Prohibiting free distribution or discounted tobacco products
- Prohibiting the sale of candy flavored cigarettes and other tobacco products; and
- Prohibiting the self service distribution of tobacco with no sales person intervention

Chairman Mendenhall and members of the committee,

I am Dick Paulsen, representing the American Lung Association of the Northern Rockies, one of the oldest and most trusted organizations in this state founded in 1916.

The American Lung Associations State of Tobacco Report for 2006 has given Montana a well deserved "F" for not protecting our children from access to tobacco, the most deadly and addictive killer of our time.

Each of the issues addressed in this bill are the reason for that "F" and also provides a process to fix, where we in Montana are failing to protecting our children in some very easy to fix areas.

It is the policies of this legislative body that can make the difference.

I want to thank Representative McAlpin for bringing this matter forward.

I think we all can hopefully agree that we do not want our children or our grandchildren to start smoking or using tobacco products. If we can not agree on that, we have another problem.

As you will hear, there is an awful lot of money and tricks used to counter our combined efforts to protect our kids from putting this garbage into their mouths and breathing it into their lungs.

The tobacco industry knows that they must hook the kids by the time they are 18 or they won't start (as noted in the bill).

There are only three (3) main points I am going to tell you about this issue and how this bill helps all of us. They also relate directly to improving our state's grade and protecting our children.

**1) Prohibiting free or discounted tobacco** – Of course the argument will be that the promotions are for adults and not intended or allowed for children. The real issue here is the fact that tobacco products are given out free **or** bought at discounts through a variety of means in our state. That is because there are not any laws that prohibit those practices in Montana. We can tax those products that are sold, but we can not stop free distribution.

*"Here -- try my nice red poisoned apple, its free, or its tax free, or it has a coupon."*

This practice helps give Montana an "F". **We can do better.**

## **2) Prohibiting candy flavored tobacco –**

It goes back to the fruit thing. These are not only packaged to look as a candy or a cosmetic product for our youngsters, but they are flavored to attract and hook. With the highly addictive nature of tobacco, they only need a few kids to try it once -- like a fish chasing a nicely tied “fly” and that fly being the luring campaigns and efforts of the tobacco industry.

We ask to just to simply get rid of the candy flavoring. This also helps give Montana an F.

We are not asking Montana to outlaw tobacco or even the menthol-type flavoring. We only want the tobacco companies to leave our children alone and knock off the candy flavored stuff because we in Montana know your game and should not stand for it.

We need each of you to make a stand on this.

## **3) Behind the counter placement of tobacco products –**

Did you know that merchants are reimbursed for stolen tobacco products?

When you put together the issues of:

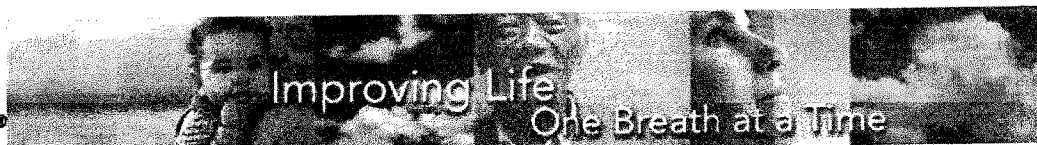
- a) Marketing these products to our children, plus
- b) A product that makes even the very young “addicts” to its lure, plus
- c) Placing cigarettes, chew and other products at knee, eye level or within arm reach of a free grab, and usually near an exit door, and
- d) The business owner is actually reimbursed for any lost or stolen products ---

We have a system that adds up to trouble, trouble on the run, and needs and demands your help.

Lets make an easy fix and --- put this stuff behind the counter – every place in Montana.

I ask that you not only support this bill in committee but I ask each of you to work to ensure its passage.

Our children certainly deserve that.

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State of Tobacco Control: 2006

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STATE OF TOBACCO CONTROL 2006  
MONTANA

Grades:

Smokefree Air

B

Youth Access

F

Tobacco Prevention and Control Spending

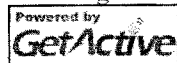
B

Cigarette Tax

B



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